

# DREAM WEDDINGS

**Y**ou know what they say: those who can't do, teach? Well, those who can't wed, plan.

So says Jennifer Lopez in her role as a wedding planner in the movie *The Wedding Planner*.

"It's somewhat true," admits Hannah Chong, executive wedding specialist of Heaven's Gift ([www.heavens-gift.com](http://www.heavens-gift.com)).

Says the 33-year-old, who is single: "People who aren't married dream about weddings all the time. I'm still a dreamer."

This comes as good news to her clients, who can be reassured that she hasn't run out of ideas for a unique and well-executed wedding.

Chong is the only wedding planner Urban interviewed who is certified by Weddings Beautiful Worldwide, a distance-learning certification program for wedding planning in America.

Chong, who plans an average of three weddings per month, prides herself on sticking to wedding traditions — like cutting the cake to symbolise unity — and caters to higher budgets involving banquets at five-star hotels, gowns by The Link, and cakes from Canelé Pâtisier.

As a lot of her clients are expatriate professionals, Chong specialises in destination weddings held at places like a beach in Bali or a Tokyo garden.

For her services, which encompass everything from booking a banquet room to conceptualising a theme to making sure every rose petal is in its place, she charges anywhere from \$3,000 to \$15,000.

However, the astronomically-high price tag only comes if you require her

to hire an events company to provide entertainment at your wedding.

Although Chong set up her wedding consultancy single-handedly two years ago, she now heads a team of four planners.

"Planning a wedding is almost impossible to do alone," she says, driving home the point that couples must realise it is a very difficult job.

So difficult in fact, that she has seen two couples break up over the course of planning their wedding. She's also had to play marriage counsellor to couples who disagree.

Indeed, planning a wedding is nowhere near as glamorous as portrayed in the Hollywood movie.

"You may be all dressed up, but you have to play butler to the bride — some of them can't move properly in their dresses — and often carry flower pots around," she says.

According to her, the two weeks leading up to the wedding are the most hectic. That's when the guest list and seating arrangements have to be finalised, and when the bride is most nerve-wracked.

The most expensive wedding Chong has planned was one held at Chijmes. Costing \$200,000, the couple treated 300 guests to a buffet spread sprawled over the entire courtyard of the former convent.

Chong relies on her suppliers to help her make each wedding a success. Florists, bridal studios, photographers and caterers all work together to make that special day unforgettable.

Apparently, providence plays a part, too. Says the staunch Christian: "I always pray for good weather, and so far, it's always happened."

